CONFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

CCD/276
24 February 1970
Original: ENGLISH

THE NETHERLANDS

Working Paper Containing Some Introductory Remarks on Steps Toward a Comprehensive Disarmament Programme

1. In resolution 1722 (XVI) of 20 December 1961 by which the General Assembly endorsed the agreement reached on the composition of the ENDC, it was recommended that the new Disarmament Committee should undertake negotiations with a view to reaching, on the basis of the joint statement of agreed principles, agreement on general and complete disarmament under effective international control. The Committee should in its work take into account, inter alia, paragraph 8 of the aforementioned principles.

2. Paragraph 8 of the agreed principles stipulates that efforts should continue without interruption until agreement upon the total programme for general and complete disarmament has been achieved. Furthermore, efforts should be undertaken to ensure early agreement on and implementation of measures of disarmament without prejudicing progress on agreement on the total programme and in such a way that these measures would facilitate and form part of that programme.

3. Since then progress has been made first and foremost in the field of collateral measures. But for reasons which are well known the hope that the main task of the Committee could be dealt with without interruption, "as a matter of the utmost urgency" (Res. 1722 (XVI)), remained unfulfilled.

In the course of its existence the Committee "gradually concentrated more of its efforts on the partial and confidence-building, or collateral measures of disarmament, as they are usually called, than on general and complete disarmament".*/ This trend is discernible in the Provisional Agenda of work of the Committee, adopted in August 1968. Likewise, in its report to the XXIVth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Committee recognizes "the relationship of the various measures already achieved and those currently being considered toward the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control".

*/ The U.N. and Disarmament 1945-1965, chapter 6, page 115.

4. Mainly as a result of the initiatives of the Romanian delegation (ENDC/PV.400) and of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the XXIVth session of the General Assembly declared the seventies as a Disarmament Decade. Disarmament and social and economic development are the main objectives of all mankind for the coming years.

5. In the relevant resolution the General Assembly endorses the view that general and complete disarmament is the ultimate goal. Toward that end, the Assembly requests this Committee:

1. to continue intensive negotiations with a view to reaching the widest possible agreement on collateral measures;
2. to work out a comprehensive programme, dealing with all aspects on the problem of the cessation of the arms race and general and complete disarmament, under effective international control, which would provide the Committee with a guideline to chart the course of its further work and its negotiations.

6. In its last report to the General Assembly the Committee expressed its conviction of the continued need to give highest priority in its work to further effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, with due consideration to maintaining a balance among various measures to prevent armament, to limit armament and of disarmament. As regards the first category some measure of success has been achieved.

7. As to the second the most hopeful event during the Committee's past session was the announcement in Moscow and Washington that discussions on the limitation of offensive strategic nuclear weapons delivery systems and systems of defense against ballistic missiles would start shortly.

The Netherlands delegation fully shares the opinion that the strategic arms limitation talks, which had a promising beginning, are of the utmost importance. They may create a new and more rational relationship in the strategic balance of the two super-powers. Their successful outcome would certainly facilitate the conclusion of further measures in the field of armaments limitation and ultimately of disarmament.

8. This should not imply, however, that no efforts are to be made in the meantime to further new agreements on such other measures. Although it is understood that there is a close relationship and interdependence between SALT and a comprehensive test ban, the Netherlands Delegation is nevertheless of the opinion that early preparatory work for a close international co-operation in the seismological field should continue to receive high priority in this context. Without prejudice to the eventual shaping of a verification system in a comprehensive test ban treaty, methods of seismological detection and identification will in any case constitute a fundamental element of such a system. Therefore, the Netherlands Delegation attaches great importance to the implementation and follow-up of the General Assembly Resolution on a world-wide exchange of seismological data.

It remains of the opinion that the question of a cut-off of the production of fissionable materials for military purposes should be examined more closely by the Committee (CCD/PV.432).

9. The Netherlands Delegation shares the view of the Italian Delegation as expressed in documents ENDC/245 and ENDC/263 that pending final results of the bilateral talks on vertical non-proliferation new and continued efforts should be made to prevent horizontal proliferation. During this session of the Committee the curtain on the Disarmament Decade could be raised by reaching agreement on the final text of a treaty on the prohibition of the emplacement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on the seabed and the ocean floor and in the subsoil thereof.

10. Measures of non-armament and arms limitation certainly contribute to the creation of a climate of mutual confidence, which may pave the way to reach the final objective of general and complete disarmament. But apart from being an aid to "confidence-building", such measures have, of course, also an intrinsic merit of their own. They should not be limited to the nuclear field.

Much time of this Committee will certainly be devoted to the conclusion of new agreements regarding chemical and biological warfare.

Within the framework of the Disarmament Decade, efforts should also be made to reduce and eliminate conventional arms races. In this respect attention should be paid to the increasing build-up of arsenals and to the international trade in conventional armaments. The S.I.P.R.I. Yearbook of World Armaments and Disarmament gives an alarming picture of the dangers involved.

11. Finally, with regard to the third category mentioned in paragraph 6, it would appear that concrete negotiations on real disarmament measures can only start fruitfully, when the preparatory phase of partial measures and confidence building has been sufficiently successful.

This, however, does not exclude that during the preparatory phase attention be devoted to the problems of general and complete disarmament. In this respect the joint statement of agreed principles still serves its purpose of being a guideline for the disarmament process as a whole. Nevertheless, as suggested by the Italian Delegation in ENDC/245, it might be considered whether this statement could be suitably supplemented. In the opinion of the Netherlands Delegation this should preferably be done in the form of an additional formulation rather than as a restatement of those principles, thus leaving the standing and validity of the joint declaration of 1961 itself intact.

12. The implementation of a comprehensive programme in the field of arms control and disarmament is closely linked with further developments and progress in the overall political world situation. The three cornerstones are: Disarmament, International Security and Peace.

During our last session several delegations referred to United Nations General Assembly resolution 2454 (XXIII) requesting this Committee to renew its effort to make progress toward general and complete disarmament. The Netherlands Delegation is of the opinion that during the preliminary phase studies could take place on the question of general and complete disarmament. The Indian Delegation (ENDC/PV.404) called on the United States and the USSR to submit revised versions of their draft treaties concerning general and complete disarmament. The Polish Delegation (ENDC/PV.406) proposed more specifically that the two Co-Chairmen prepare a new draft for the <u>first</u> stage of disarmament. An alternative approach might also be considered by the Committee, namely to start with an examination of the characteristics and requirements of the <u>final</u> stage of a process of general and complete disarmament. On the basis of such a study it could be tried subsequently to trace out a route along which this final stage can be reached. A similar method was proposed by the Swedish Delegation as far back as 1964 (ENDC/PV.202). Perhaps it could offer the advantage of getting a better insight in the political requirements and structural needs of a disarming world.

13. The consideration of a comprehensive programme inevitably raises the questions of priorities and deadlines. In this connexion reference should be made to the proposal of Sweden (ENDC/PV.397) for "balanced package deals" and of India for a "selective approach" (ENDC/PV.404).

It is, of course, in the nature of things, when there is a whole range of topics, to establish some sort of order of priorities. However, in the opinion of the Netherlands delegation such a list can only be of a very tentative character. It should be flexible and may be subject to change - as has already been shown in the past - in as much as the political realities of the moment require. One should not overlook that the "partial measures" which have been adopted or are now under discussion, are, in fact, elements of different stages of the proposals for general and complete disarmament.

The very character of negotiations on arms control and disarmament is ill suited to set any meaningful timetables in the context of a "Decade". It remains to be seen what the net result will be at the end of the ten year period. No amount of pressure, nor the best efforts of the Committee to meet certain "target" dates can alter that fact. It is unlikely that a precise schedule and fixed time spans would be helpful in achieving the very goal we are trying to reach. It would therefore be undesirable to establish too rigid a programme of work or to assume that it will be possible strictly to adhere to any particular pattern.

Of course, it is a quite different matter to agree on a certain sequence of measures, to be carried out within specified periods of time, in a Treaty on General and Complete Disarmament.